

it was God's will that Paul should be beaten with many stripes and for years confined to a gloomy dungeon, but from that prison in which Paul was incarcerated there issued four Epistles, (1) Philemon, in which we have a most skillful statement of the relation of master and slave; (2) Philippians, which is one of the most loving, joyous, and triumphant expressions of an indwelling Christ we have in all literature; (3) Ephesians, which Coleridge calls "the divinest composition of man;" and (4) Colossians, which is almost like the refrain of heaven's song.

Argued from the standpoint of results the conclusion would be inevitable that God *willed* Paul's imprisonment, but inasmuch as under the divine government "all things" work together for good, we may not determine from mere results what is and what is not God's will. God may and *does* bring good out of that which he has *not* willed. Hence no event in life that constitutes a part of human experience, whatever of permanent good may have grown out of it, must be made the basis from which to determine what is God's will concerning us. If, as some have averred, the death of President McKinley has resulted in essential good to the country and to the world at large, it can not be argued from that proposition, however true it may be, that therefore God willed his death. *God's will can not be determined by any event in life whatever the sequence of such event may be.*

The lesson for us to learn is that the *good* things which God is daily crowding into our lives, the gift of life, of health, of strength, the sweet and the beautiful, the pure and the nobler things of life, these rather than the loss of them, are expressive of God's will concerning us. Let us learn also to see God's will in what he gives us as well as in what he takes away from us, then shall we have higher and nobler conceptions of the nature and character of him who is both our God and Father.

### The Human Sympathy of Jesus

We first have proof of this in the fact of his coming. It was not a pleasure trip from heaven, his eternal dwelling place, into such a world as this. A man brought up amid surroundings of luxury, wealth, beauty and refinement, would not as a matter of taste or pleasure take up even a temporary residence in a smallpox hospital, or a lepers' lazaretto. If he went there at all, some other and more powerful motive would take him.

It was so with Jesus, who came into this world to save it from its miseries, to heal its diseases, to conquer its sin. A poignant grief, an unspeakable sorrow, will burden even a sensitive human soul at the spectacle of misery and despair. It was this quality of soul which made Jesus "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." The sorrows of a world, the sorrows of many ages, pressed upon him. Strange it is that we imagine that God does not suffer. Can a tender father be insensible to the suffering of his child? Will not a keener pang afflict the parental or maternal heart? It is written that God so loved the world that he gave his Son. And the Son came, and lived within our narrow human life, and died our death. Could there be

greater proof of the sympathy for human suffering which moves the divine heart? Let us be assured of this, that "in all our afflictions he is afflicted," and that no burden of grief comes to us that is not weighed in God's balances, and felt in the Father's heart. "Are not all my tears in thy bottle?"

We learn more of and sympathy of Jesus from the nature of his message. "I came not to call the righteous; but sinners to repentance." The wise physician goes to the root of the malady. Sin is the fruitful seed which brings forth the universal crop of sorrow. Sow sin, reap trouble. Short logic, this, but as absolute as eternal law. The world sadly needs more preaching of this brief but tremendous creed of cause and effect. Sin is the seed, trouble is the crop. Room for endless ramifications, condensations, amplifications, illustrations, applications, in this short text. Preach it ye preachers in this logical light of cause and effect, in this inevitable and inexorable sequence of law. There is something in the human consciousness which makes it rebel against the merely *arbitrary* view of punishment for sin, as of a stroke coming from another, and by the arbitrary will of another. But face to face with the fact that he brings his trouble upon himself, that his punishment, his ruin, his despair, his damnation, is the work of his own hands, he hesitates, he trembles, he looks anxiously around for a way of escape.

Repentance: A bitter medicine perhaps, but desperate diseases yield to no other. A keen surgery this, the cutting off of offending limbs, the plucking out of offending eyes. Repentance: A truly very narrow gate, but leading to the skies. We need much teaching of the true nature of repentance. There is a vast deal of shallow repenting and oft repeating even among church members. We have heard brethren confess the same sins once a week for years. Just think of it, every week the same old tale, over and over. You can't see that he has made a single forward step. One would imagine that he would get along a little, that he would finally conquer some small sin or other. But no, there's the same old list, and not a single one left out. Every item is at least ten years old, and all this time he has been listening to some sort of teaching about repentance, and divine grace. Brother preacher, what sort of repentance have you been preaching to this man?

Infinite love supplemented by infinite wisdom forms an invincible combination for the salvation of men. Love, sympathy, pity, expressed in terms of sacrifice, written in characters of sorrow and suffering, bearing about the symbol of the cross, illuminated with the peculiar glory of the resurrection, animated with the sublime inspiration of eternal life. Wisdom, pointing out the infallible way of human co-operation with the divine impulse,—repentance with its roots deep in regeneration, bringing forth therefore, not the same old sins for ten years or twenty, but the new life not to be repented of, with all the manifold activities of that new life called "good works," or "obedience." Faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ, the teacher, the healer, the helper, the Brother of Man, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world—Faith, blossoming into *trust*, bringeth forth the fruitage of "perfect peace."